

Summary of Fauquier County Farmland Preservation Purchase of Development Rights Program (PDR)

Statement of Purpose:

Agriculture is the leading industry in Fauquier County. A critical mass of farmland is necessary for the continued vitality of the economic engine of production agriculture. Farmland owners interested in preserving their farm and natural character of their property may be eligible to have development rights purchased by the County. The Fauquier County Board of Supervisors formally established the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program, a voluntary program that pays landowners to protect the farmland and natural resource assets of their property. The PDR Program allows landowners to enter into agreements to sell the development potential of qualifying property to the County while maintaining the right to continue to own and use the property. The purpose of the PDR Program will be to protect farmland and retain the agricultural industry's critical mass, in particular, farm parcels that are economically viable operations.

Land Use Policy

Fauquier County Comprehensive Plan provides specific endorsement for a PDR program as part of Chapter 8, Rural Areas Land Use Plan (Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan approved by the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors in meeting assembled on 16 March 1999). An Agricultural Advisory Subcommittee developed a lucid but simple proposed PDR program that can be implemented without attendant additional governmental bureaucracy. The PDR program was adopted by resolution of the Board of Supervisors in February 2002.

Seeking Voluntary Proffers

Old Dominion Electric Cooperative has agreed to provide \$1,500,000 to begin a Fauquier County PDR program. This voluntary proffer was provided by ODEC as part of their re-zoning and permitting request as a nexus to pollution mitigation.

County Funding

Funding for the PDR program is provided by rollback taxes, which are placed in a Capital Fund. Rollback tax revenues in FY2001 and FY2002 generated \$308,000. FY2003 has an additional \$100,000 budgeted for PDRs.

Additional Funding Sources

Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States Government have made matching resources available for local farmland PDR programs and significant expanded State and Federal funding for PDR programs is probable. Private non-profit organizations, including land trusts, may also be willing to provide matching funds for local PDR programs.

PDR Program Criteria

1. Property is an economically viable farming operation.
 - Gross farm income exceeds \$25,000
 - At least one family member's principal occupation involves farming this parcel/ forestland
 - Farm has invested in substantial infrastructure improvements such as barns, bins, specialty structures, fencing, drainage, ditches, waterway improvements, etc.
2. Parcel is greater than 50 acres, or comprises a combined area of contiguous parcels greater than 50 acres.
3. Parcel is not presently zoned any category other than Rural Agricultural (RA) or Rural Conservation (RC).
4. The parcel is not under conservation easement or pending consideration for conservation easement or otherwise restricted from development.

PDR Review Committee Criteria

The Agricultural Advisory Committee ranks farm parcels based on five critical areas listed below:

- Quality of Farmland
- Surrounding Support Quality
- Likelihood of conversion to Non-Farm Use and Off-Farm Income
- Environmental Qualities
- Historic and Scenic Qualities

Price

Maximum price paid will be \$20,000 per development right unit based on gross by-right allotment per sliding scale.

Timeline

- October – December – Application period end December 20, 2002
- January – March – Application Review and ranking by staff and Ag Advisory Committee
- April – June – Purchase Approval by Board of Supervisors
- July – September – Purchase completed by County Administrator and County Attorney.